United Nations A/52/PV.51

General Assembly

Fifty-second Session

Official Records

51st plenary meeting
Friday, 21 November 1997, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Udovenko . . . . . (Ukraine)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 38

Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies

Report of the Secretary-General (A/52/513)

Draft resolution (A/52/L.28)

The President: Today we are discussing an important item relating to ways and mechanisms to enhance support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments aimed at promoting and consolidating new or restored democracies. It has become increasingly clear that the recent dramatic changes in the international arena have given a powerful impetus to the global process of democratization. Since the first International Conference of Newly Restored Democracies, held at Manila in 1988, we have witnessed the emergence of a great number of countries that have fulfilled their peoples' aspirations by joining the family of States that have been following the path of freedom, justice and democracy for many decades — or centuries.

The Managua Declaration and Plan of Action endorsed in 1994 at the second conference, the International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, emphasized the need for active involvement by the United Nations system in this expanding process.

The final document of the Third International Conference of the New or Restored Democracies on Democracy and Development, held at Bucharest, reiterated the great importance of the United Nations system in helping the new or restored democracies to meet the challenges before them.

Today, in pursuance of the document's recommendation, we shall discuss new ideas and suggestions as to the enhancement of the role of the United Nations system in supporting democracy and good governance in those States, as well as providing assistance in the accomplishment of their priority tasks. I believe that placing the issue of further development of the new and restored democracies under the broad United Nations umbrella gains ever more relevance and importance in the light of the ongoing process of United Nations renewal and reform. Particular attention should be paid to methods of strengthening the mechanisms for monitoring the formation and development of those States so that specific assistance can be made promptly available and deliverable. I also believe that the deeper involvement of the United Nations in this continuous worldwide process of democratization will greatly benefit the Organization itself in its period of essential structural transformations aimed at, *inter alia*, further democratization of its procedures and functioning methods.

I would like to take this opportunity to invite delegations to make their constructive contribution towards forging closer cooperation between Governments

97-86557 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

and the United Nations in the field of promotion and consolidation of new and restored democracies.

I now call on the representative of Romania to introduce draft resolution A/52/L.28.

Mr. Gorita (Romania): On the threshold of the year 2000, we have an unprecedented opportunity to live in an open world — a world of permanent communication and interaction. Its perpetual movement cannot be stopped. Globalization cannot be assimilated to its mere economic dimension. Globalization means, above all, consecration of universal values and symbolic assets. It means broader knowledge and, consequently, better understanding and cooperation.

The world today is no longer a space of cold war, irreconcilably divided between friends and foes. The changes that are taking place require that we involve ourselves in a process of rethinking global society and inter-human relations. The political sphere can no longer be conceived as a separate space, governed by rules that are understood only by professionals and inaccessible to the majority. Governance should be understood as the best way of building togetherness — as a set of practices aimed at uniting all the major components of society around common projects.

Effective democracy should not only allow participation in decision-making, but also lead to development and prosperity for all. Genuine development does not occur in a political vacuum. It depends on the empowerment of communities to influence decisions and to articulate demands. Development without democracy is impaired if it brings benefits only to a few elites.

That is why the assertion that democracy, development and respect for human rights are interlinked and mutually reinforcing is so valid. Their interaction enhances the impact on their respective societies. The Governments that foster respect for democracy and human rights and subserve development efforts to the benefit of the entire society acquire a higher profile, domestically and internationally. Many success stories in the developing world stand as proof.

The international community has started to pay greater and deeper attention to the role that democratic values can play in solving long-standing national issues and in improving the international environment. These debates are amplifying and taking a variety of forms. My country has been involved in many of them.

This year, Romania had the honour of hosting the Third International Conference of the New or Restored Democracies on Democracy and Development. The Conference enjoyed the participation of almost 80 countries and 47 non-governmental organizations from Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe. The political document entitled "Progress Review and Recommendations", circulated as document A/52/334, which was adopted by consensus, acknowledges the emergence of new thinking about democratic values and their potential for making democracy work in the service of development and prosperity. A comprehensive and far-reaching analysis of the democratic processes which have been taking place recently gives special value to that document. The ministers and representatives of the new or restored democracies who met in Bucharest reaffirmed their commitment to the process of democratization in their societies.

They acknowledged the relationship of interdependence and mutual reinforcement that exists between democracy, development and good governance. They concluded that democratization is a world movement based on shared values, which embraces North and South, East and West, and transcends traditional confrontational lines. The Bucharest document identified an almost universal recognition that a democratic system of government is the best model to ensure a framework of liberties for lasting solutions to political, economic and social problems. The participants admitted that the real challenge today is how to strengthen democracy through the practices of efficient government in order to promote sustainable development.

A substantial part of the Bucharest document is devoted to recommendations addressing the vital areas that are significant for the consolidation of democratic societies. These are, in the first place, guidelines for strengthening policies and principles addressed to Governments in the fields of human rights, judicial reform, corruption, organized crime, decentralization, participation in political life, elections, gender equality, civic education, accountability and transparency, media, and civil service reform. Secondly, they include recommendations related to civil society and the private sector, to donor countries and the international community, and to the United Nations system and the international financial organizations.

I will not insist on presenting these realistic and action-oriented conclusions. They are to the merit of the ministers and other Bucharest Conference participants

who achieved a splendid exercise in political willingness. I am convinced that the document, entitled simply "Progress Review and Recommendations", will provide a useful benchmark in future discussions on democracy and its relationship to development.

On behalf of my Government, I would like to reiterate from this rostrum our wholehearted gratitude all the Governments and organizations that participated in, supported and made concrete and valuable contributions to the success of the Conference.

As you are aware, the Bucharest Conference is part of a series that started in Manila in 1988 and continued in Managua in 1994. This movement has given a strong momentum to the process of global and regional democratization. Although the intergovernmental conferences on democracy started quite independently from the United Nations, since 1994 the Organization has become more actively involved in this domain.

General Assembly resolution 51/31, adopted by consensus last year, asked the Secretary-General to present a report at the fifty-second session including, among other things, innovative ways and means to enable the United Nations to respond effectively and in an integrated manner to requests of Member States for assistance in the field of democratization.

Further to this resolution, the Secretary-General has submitted an excellent report, contained in document A/52/513, that focuses on policies and principles, and gives a comprehensive account of relevant recent events which are shaping the emerging framework for intergovernmental action in support of new or restored democracies.

I wish to express the satisfaction of the Romanian Government with respect to the observations and recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report.

First, the value of the electoral assistance provided or coordinated by the United Nations is unquestionable. The potential of the United Nations in this respect should be further considered in the new international environment, where democratization efforts have become more prevalent.

Secondly, we should underline again the important role of civil society in the democratization processes. As noted in the report, the proposal of the Third International Conference that the United Nations should arrange a larger forum for representatives of non-governmental organizations to discuss democratization and the role of civil society in order to follow up on the results of the Bucharest Conference has a bearing on a recommendation on a people's millennium assembly contained in the reform package under consideration at this Assembly session. We encourage the Secretary-General to discuss those ideas further.

Thirdly, we fully agree that the peace-building and development, democratization and governance efforts of the Organization are distinct but mutually reinforcing. This underlines the importance for the United Nations system to improve its ability to cooperate and to coordinate its actions. Like the Secretary-General, we hope that the integration of more effective United Nations work on democratization and good governance into the reform process will be possible.

Fourthly, we welcome the essential conclusion of the Secretary-General that the universal principle of democracy has more practical relevance to United Nations activities now than ever before. The United Nations is expected to work with a greater unity of purpose and coherence. We are happy to ascertain the readiness of the United Nations system to form a part of the follow-up mechanism to the Third International Conference. A reformed Organization oriented to the twenty-first century should promote democratization, as it will continue to work for peace, security and development.

On a more general note, I would like to praise the format and the substance of the Secretary-General's report on item 38. The concision, vision and modernity that are features of the report augur well for the profile of the Organization in the next millennium.

Romania, in its capacity as current Chairman of the Third International Conference of New or Restored Democracies on Democracy and Development, has the particular privilege to submit to the General Assembly the draft resolution on agenda item 38, entitled "Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies" [A/52/L.28 and Add.1].

I am honoured to do so on behalf of the following sponsors: Albania, Andorra, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Benin, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Cape Verde, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Ecuador, El

Salvador, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Mali, Malta, the Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Mongolia, Namibia, the Netherlands, Nicaragua, Niger, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation, San Marino, Sierra Leone, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Suriname, Sweden, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America, Uruguay, Zambia, and my own country, Romania.

In its preamble, the draft resolution reiterates the set of principles agreed upon by the General Assembly at previous sessions. It takes note of some events relevant to the subject we are now considering that have taken place this year. The draft resolution also takes note of important new documents adopted in international forums, namely the Progress Review and Recommendations adopted at the Third International Conference of New or Restored Democracies on Democracy and Development and the Universal Declaration on Democracy adopted by the Inter-Parliamentary Council.

In the operative part of the draft resolution, the General Assembly would welcome the report presented by the Secretary-General at the fifty-second session and express appreciation for the observations and recommendations contained in the report.

The decision of the Third International Conference to hold the next conference in Africa and the offer of the Government of Benin to host the Conference would both be welcomed.

The General Assembly would commend the Secretary-General, and through him the United Nations system, for the activities undertaken at the request of Governments to support the efforts to consolidate democracy.

It would recognize the important role that the Organization has to play in providing support to the efforts of Governments to achieve democratization within the context of development efforts.

The General Assembly would encourage the Secretary-General to continue to improve the capacity of the United Nations to respond effectively to the requests of Member States through support of their efforts to achieve the goals of good governance and democratization. Member States would be further encouraged to promote democratization.

The Secretary-General, Member States, the relevant specialized agencies and bodies of the United Nations system, as well as other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, would be invited to contribute to the follow-up process of the Third International Conference of New or Restored Democracies.

Finally, the General Assembly would request the Secretary-General to submit a report to the General Assembly at its fifty-third session, and would decide to include in the provisional agenda of that session the item entitled "Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies".

The draft resolution before us represents a reasonable response from the General Assembly to one of the most promising and challenging changes that distinguish the world society at present. The 80 sponsors, including my own delegation, hope that the draft resolution will be adopted without a vote, as has been the case since the first introduction of this item on the agenda of the General Assembly.

Mrs. Lucas (Luxembourg) *(interpretation from French)*: I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia — have aligned themselves with this statement. The associated country of Cyprus and the member of the European Free Trade Association participating in the European Economic Area, Norway, have also aligned themselves with this statement.

Respect for democracy and the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms are the three pillars of our modern societies. We welcome the fact that this decade has seen many racist, dictatorial and oppressive regimes replaced by Governments with the avowed aim of respecting the will of their people. The democratization process under way must continue until all States members of this Organization are governed according to the principles of democracy.

Democratic systems may take many forms, which are rooted in the specific conditions of their social structure. However, be they federal or unitary, presidential or parliamentary, they all embody a set of essential common values, *inter alia*, the freedom of citizens to express themselves through free and transparent elections, and the active development and strengthening of civil society. Civil society must ensure that values constantly change and evolve in a peaceful manner.

Democracy is also synonymous with pluralism, which nourishes the dynamic interaction of the nation's actors on a basis of mutual respect. Peoples must enjoy freedom of association and the possibility of forming political parties, and thus of playing an active part in the political life of their country.

Another key element of a democratic system is the separation of legislative, executive and judicial powers. Full respect for human rights and protection of the rights of ethnic, religious or political minorities are an integral part of a democratic system, as are freedom of opinion and of the press. In a democracy, the reality of political life must be expressed in a process of dynamic interaction between the people and their representatives. The role of non-governmental organizations is particularly important in that respect.

The European Union welcomes the fact that the report of the Secretary-General [A/52/513] gives an extensive analysis of the various forms of support which the international community affords to new or restored democracies and a detailed review of the activities undertaken by the United Nations to promote and consolidate the democratization process. The report stresses that these activities cannot be implemented separately, but instead should complement the substantial efforts made by the United Nations to foster human development, *inter alia* by creating effective, responsible and transparent systems of government. By the same token, these activities must be integrated into United Nations peace-building and peacekeeping operations in the field.

The European Union supports and stresses the importance of United Nations efforts, *inter alia*, by the Electoral Assistance Division, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank, to promote democratization. In that regard, it particularly wishes to commend the efforts of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in support of the democratization process.

In the past year, we have attended two international conferences on democratization and governance. The Third International Conference of the New or Restored Democracies on Democracy and Development held in Bucharest from 2 to 4 September 1997 and the UNDP International Conference on Governance for Sustainable Growth and Equity herald a new approach to international cooperation in the field of democratization.

The European Union feels that the Civil Society Forum, organized during the Bucharest Conference, is an important step towards integrating citizens and their organizations into the democratization process. In this context, we welcome the organization of regional seminars by representatives of civil society in May 1997 at Imatra in Finland and Svetogorsk in Russia, and we would like to encourage such regional initiatives.

As the Secretary-General of the United Nations noted in his report, one of the chief questions raised at the Bucharest Conference, in which 80 delegations took part, concerns methods of monitoring the progress of democratization. The European Union is following with interest the proposal to set up a specific mechanism to strengthen cooperation between the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions. The European Union also welcomes the decision taken at the Third International Conference to hold the next conference in an African country.

With regard to the International Conference on Governance held in New York from 28 to 30 July 1997, the European Union welcomes the fact that, for the first time, representatives of Governments and civil society were able to meet together in the General Assembly Hall. The European Union endorses the conclusions of the Conference that good governance is synonymous with governance that is effective, participatory, transparent, accountable and equitable and promotes the rule of law. The State, in close collaboration with the private sector and civil society, must lead the way with regard to good governance.

The European Union and its member States have committed themselves firmly to the promotion of democratization and the transition towards permanent and democratic systems of government. This commitment has taken a variety of forms. Thus, the Union has introduced a cooperation and development policy emphasizing positive actions to defend human rights and promote democracy. The European Union is, likewise, implementing numerous projects to support the rule of

law, the transition towards democracy and the strengthening of non-governmental organizations and other institutions which seek to promote the emergence of a pluralistic society. It actively and strongly supports the activities of the Secretary-General and the specialized agencies of the United Nations to promote the democratization process.

The United Nations must establish both the durability and the universality of democratic values, while taking account of the extreme diversity of situations around the world. The institution of democratic systems is the best way to prevent conflicts and carries the promise of prosperity and the affirmation of individual values. That is why the international community must encourage and promote efforts to put these aspirations into practice through the United Nations system.

The European Union endorses the Secretary-General's recommendations concerning electoral assistance, the strengthening of civil society and the coordination of all United Nations activities in the field of democratization and governance. The European Union will continue to give active support to all these efforts.

Mr. Kasanda (Zambia): Let me begin by thanking the Secretary-General for his report contained in document A/52/513 on "Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies". The report is very informative and should go a long way towards facilitating our deliberations.

My delegation also expresses its thanks to the Permanent Representative of Romania for circulating, in document A/52/334, the "Progress Review and Recommendations" of the Third International Conference of the New or Restored Democracies on Democracy and Development, held in Bucharest, Romania, from 2 to 4 September 1997. Zambia had the privilege of being represented at that Conference, and it is the hope of my delegation that the international community will undertake concrete follow-up activities to implement its recommendations.

Mrs. Camara (Guinea), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The question of democracy is increasingly becoming an important factor in national and international affairs. In fact, the Third International Conference of the New or Restored Democracies noted that democratization is a world movement. We are, today, seeing democracy expanding around the world, with a majority of the world's people now living under democracies.

Against this background, the need to promote efforts to encourage education for democracy and open all future conferences on democracy to all interested United Nations Member States becomes cardinal.

In paragraph 27 of his report, the Secretary-General makes an important observation:

> "Democracy is not a model to be copied but a goal to be attained." [A/52/513, para. 27]

Many countries that are democratizing face diverse challenges which no single inflexible model of democracy can be used to meet. Poverty and inequality, social, religious, tribal and/or ethnic intolerance, and economic and political instability are major challenges to democracy. Meeting these challenges will depend on the peculiar circumstances of each country that is undergoing democratization.

Developing countries like mine which have regular consultations with representatives of the donor community on democracy and good governance are keenly interested in this distinction made by the Secretary-General. All too often, these consultations have tended to lose their value when donors attempt to micro-manage the process of democratization in a given country, without due respect for the peculiar circumstances of the country in question.

However, at the end of the day, all of us who are democratizing agree that basic fundamentals must be met, among them the promotion of the existence of representative government elected by the majority of the population through secret ballot, in regular periodic and genuine elections, as well as the promotion of party competition, an independent judiciary, guarantees of fundamental human rights and individual freedoms, transparency and accountability under the rule of law, a free and independent press and the growth of civil society.

My country began its democratization process in 1991. We are now in the phase of consolidating that process. In this phase, Zambia will look to the United Nations system to provide concrete assistance in various areas related to democracy, good governance and development. We are, in this regard, happy to note that the Secretary-General has registered his readiness, in

paragraph 7 of his report, to provide such assistance to interested countries.

The Bucharest Conference came out with important recommendations, all of which are detailed in document A/52/334. I would, however, like to give particular emphasis to the recommendation related to the external debt problems of developing countries. As the Bucharest Conference noted, the external debt problems of developing countries continue to be a serious threat to democratization. It is critical that the international community promote enhanced debt relief for developing countries so as to improve their fiscal situation and overall development prospects. The Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative is a welcome development in this regard. Improvements in the form of quicker access to the Initiative and ensuring that HIPC relief is adequately funded are needed in order to make it more effective.

Related to the question of durable debt relief is the issue of official development assistance (ODA) flows to developing countries. Both bilateral and multilateral official development assistance flows to developing countries are declining. When we add this to the poor access that the export products of developing countries have to the markets of developed countries, and volatile currency markets, such a state of affairs is a recipe for making the process of democratization unstable and intolerable. Obviously, the international community does not want such an outcome. In order to promote international cooperation for democracy and development effectively, there is need to establish a new consensus on the financing of development. In this connection, my delegation can only reiterate the need to convene an international conference on the financing of development, as a matter of urgency.

Let me conclude by stating that as a sponsor of the draft resolution under this item on our agenda, my delegation hopes and expects that it will be adopted by consensus.

Mr. Eitel (Germany): Let me first of all state that my delegation fully associates itself with the statement just delivered by the Permanent Representative of Luxembourg on behalf of the European Union.

Germany, together with some 30 other countries, attended as an observer the Third International Conference of the New or Restored Democracies on Democracy and Development, which took place with great success this past September in Bucharest. Yet somehow the category "observer" does not quite seem to capture the very particular situation we find ourselves in: Germany is not an "unconcerned bystander", merely following the problems, challenges and hazards of new and restored democracies with interest. Germany itself is — in its eastern part, where close to a quarter of the German population lives — a newly restored democracy. And while a number of circumstances set this situation apart from that of many other new or restored democracies, there are also many striking similarities, parallels and common experiences.

The German people in its entirety is proud, and I believe justly so, of the peaceful revolution which took place in eastern Germany almost eight years ago. The enduring and inspiring symbol of that revolution was, of course, the fall of the Berlin Wall, which in turn came to epitomize the end of the cold war and also the beginning of another wave of democratization.

Let me say a few words as to where Germany stands now, seven years after unification. The effects of unification still determine political life at the level of the country as a whole, the federal states, and the local authorities. For millions of people in the new federal states, daily life has taken a decisive turn for the better. Freedom, democracy and the opportunity for material well-being are no longer restricted to the western part of the country. In a country that had been divided for more than four decades, a socialist economic and political system had to be remodelled according to the principles of a social market economy. People in the new *Länder* found themselves confronted with a transformation process that for many of them amounted to an abrupt change of their conditions of life, and a sometimes painful break with identities, life plans and orientations.

Despite tremendous difficulties, the process of economic unification has been largely a successful one, although a lot remains to be done. For example, in the new federal states many jobs were initially lost in the transition from socialist planning to a market economy. Today, however, there are indications that recovery is under way. Progress on the other aspect of the unification process has been slower. Shedding 40 years spent under a socialist regime is not easy. Information and education of citizens with regard to the functioning and the values of a democratic State is one of the basic tasks which not only the State but other institutions and actors of civil society as well have to take upon themselves. To become a conscious and responsible citizen means to know and to accept the political, legal and moral foundations of the State.

The Secretary-General has provided us with an insightful report on the question of "Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies" [A/52/513]. My Government has carefully studied the results of the Bucharest Conference, which have been circulated as a United Nations document [A/52/334].

Over the past few years, it has been most encouraging to see a consensus emerge regarding the different components and factors which aid the establishment of a democratic system and which in turn benefit from the existence of such a system. The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action clearly sets out the most fundamental of these relationships:

> "Democracy, development and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. Democracy is based on the freely expressed will of the people to determine their own political, economic, social and cultural systems and their full participation in all aspects of their lives." [A/CONF.157/24 (Part I), chapter III, para. 8]

The Agenda for Development states that efforts to promote democracy and good governance are fundamental to the consolidation of peace and development.

One of the self-evident but nevertheless important lessons that we can draw from these different efforts is that we have to view the various notions and concepts as interrelated and interdependent — or, as we say at the United Nations, mutually reinforcing. Good governance, the rule of law, respect for human rights, development, peace and democracy do not exist in isolation. They are also the indispensable requirements for economic and social development. People want to enjoy the benefits of democratization. It is in this area that Governments bear a special responsibility. They have to create the conditions for economic growth through investment, for social justice, and for offering all sectors of the population education, health and other social services.

What are the consequences for the United Nations system? The United Nations and its different programmes have to contribute to creating the environment for good governance and democratization. But if one focuses on the role of the United Nations in a more circumscribed manner, it is the area of electoral assistance which comes to mind first.

The report of the Secretary-General rightly points out that the United Nations system does not endorse or promote any specific form of government. The report furthermore, and in our view again rightly so, states that observation of elections will not suffice as a yardstick for measuring democratization. But democratic elections continue to be the hallmark of a functioning democratic system. The United Nations, as an impartial actor, should continue to offer, at the request of States, electoral assistance in the broadest sense. This evidently includes not only electoral monitoring, but also capacity-building at the institutional level, and it will often require long-term efforts. At present the United Nations, for lack of resources, cannot comply with many of the requests put to it. We wish to see the capacities of the Secretariat substantially strengthened in this respect. The task also encompasses more conceptual work and exchange with other actors in this area.

To reduce democratization to the holding of elections has variably been termed the "fallacy of electoralism" or the "free elections trap". Democracy is not an "on-off" event, and elections by themselves do not constitute democracy. Elections which take place without some essential institutional underpinnings, without a functioning judiciary system, without the rule of law, run the risk of discrediting the very concept of democracy. This is where we see another important task for the United Nations: to give expert advice to Governments regarding the complex, multifold tasks that many of them face in connection with a democratic transition.

Two years ago, my Government created a programme to aid democratization processes and to promote the respect for human rights and the rule of law. A further component of this programme is financial or staff support for election observation missions. In the context of its cooperation programmes, the German Government has supported a number of long-term projects to strengthen an environment which is conducive to democratization. Lasting contributions towards democratization in a number of countries have been effected through German political foundations. Those projects have addressed a large spectrum of participants, issues and institutions. They have, on a number of occasions, been termed crucial to the success of a democratic transition by the countries themselves.

Given our history, my country thinks it has a special appreciation of the problems and challenges facing the new and restored democracies, and we would like to state

that we want to continue to cooperate closely with those States.

Mr. Dlamini (Swaziland): I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of my delegation on the agenda item under review.

The Kingdom of Swaziland welcomes the Secretary-General's report in document A/52/513, entitled "Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies". The report addresses, among other issues, a new understanding of democratization; the role of civil society and the private sector in democratization; gender, participation and democratization; and recent international events regarding democratization and governance.

We have carefully studied the report and identified the above as the core issues that deserve the total and undivided attention of the United Nations — all the more because of the dynamic nature of the society in which we live today. Based, therefore, on the four critical issues I have referred to, my delegation is alive to the fact that a periodic assessment of the ways and means with which we achieve and practice democracy is an essential tool towards peace-building and sustainable development. This is significant to developing nations such as the Kingdom of Swaziland, which, though they have been independent for a while, still require some assistance to maintain the tempo of their quest for democratization and good governance.

In its resolutions 50/133 of 1995 and 51/31 of 1996, the General Assembly mandated the Secretary-General to continue to improve the capacity of the Organization to respond effectively to the requests of Member States in their efforts to achieve the goal of democratization. Acting on that mandate, the United Nations has been actively involved in the movement of new or restored democracies, and has, as a result, convened a number of regional conferences which brought together a diverse range of interested parties. Notable among these conference are the Third International Conference of the New or Restored Democracies on Democracy and Development, held in Bucharest in September 1997, and the International Conference on Governance for Sustainable Growth and Equity, organized by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and held in New York in July 1997. Both these conferences marked the start of a new way of thinking about international cooperation in the sphere of governance and democratization. And from them emerged two key principles of considerable importance: a reaffirmation that international assistance for democratization and reform needs to be tailored to fit into the broader political, cultural and social circumstances of each country, and that good governance is effective, participatory, transparent, accountable and equitable, and promotes the rule of law.

My delegation is pleased to further note from the Secretary-General's report that the United Nations is committed to its role as the key player in the field of democratization and governance. We are heartened by the Organization's recognition of the fact that in assisting and supporting the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies, and democratization in general, the Organization does not in any way endorse or promote any specific form of democracy. In keeping with this view, the Kingdom of Swaziland believes that democracy is not a model to be copied but a goal to be attained, and the pace at which it can proceed is dependent on a variety of political, economic, social and cultural factors proper to the circumstances of a particular culture and society. Hence the Kingdom's belief in analysing its own socio-economic and political system with a view to constructing a vision for the future based on our own beliefs and philosophy, one which reflects the deepest aspirations of the people of the Kingdom of Swaziland.

This is the blueprint we have laid down for ourselves as a country, and it is one that we are committed to pursue at all costs and with vigour if we are to achieve sustainable development and respond effectively to the demands of the next millennium. Addressing the fifty-second session of the General Assembly in September this year, His Majesty King Mswati III mentioned in his statement that for us to achieve sustainable growth and development, we need the understanding and support of the international community in our efforts to address both short and long-term social and political challenges. In order to meet these challenges, we realize that we need to create an environment in which our people can prosper. It is for this reason that His Majesty called for the review of the nation's Constitution based on the views and aspirations of the Swazi nation. In essence, His Majesty is anxious to see the inclusion of the entire Swazi populace in this process. This, in our view, constitutes the best course of action. We need a political dispensation that emerges from the grass roots, and not one "dumped" by external forces.

Our unique home-grown political system embraces the key variables and characteristics of democracy.

Election through the secret ballot, direct representation, transparency and accountability to the electorate are some of the built-in safety valves the system is proud of. Like all political systems, however, ours has had its shortcomings. The initiative by His Majesty, in direct consultation with the entire Swazi nation, to strengthen our Constitution is but one of the initiatives that we consider a desirable answer to the differences we might have as a nation.

Every country in the world is today seeking a winning formula for economic growth, social advancement and development. In effect, we have realized that we need to have a clear-cut policy on economic and social development. The private sector as a development partner has a crucial role to play in the consolidation of democracy and the promotion of sustainable human development. It has the ability to distribute economic resources, increase economic efficiency and provide employment, thus improving the population's standard of living. The Government, on the other hand, has the responsibility to create an enabling environment in order to allow the private sector to become the engine for growth. One of the basic realities is that if we are to survive economically as a nation, we must do everything in our power to facilitate the healthy growth of the private sector. The standards we have set for ourselves in this regard give us good reason to be optimistic about the future.

In concluding my statement, allow me to state that, for the Kingdom of Swaziland, democracy denotes the participation of the people in Government. In a nutshell, it denotes a process by which a policy of increasing the involvement of the people in their own Government is implemented. This process entails the putting in place of appropriate structures to facilitate the increased involvement of the people in Government. Our system and philosophy seek to achieve exactly this participation in Government. To this end, the system of Government encourages people to form structures at the local and regional levels in order to articulate their wishes and aspirations. With this understanding, we have been able to prosper and remain the peaceful country which, over the years, we have grown and have been known to be. We look to the United Nations to assist us in our endeavour to strengthen our rich heritage — one that we aspire to pass on to many generations to come.

I would observe off the cuff that it saddens me, as a son of Africa, that today we are talking of democracies. We in Africa appeal to our friends to appreciate our efforts. We know our problems; we know what we want to achieve. All we need and want is for the international community to support our efforts. The bad history that is associated with us in Africa in particular has never been of our own design, but is an accident of history that befell the continent of Africa.

Africa today suffers marginalization and experiences the skirmishes of wars that are fought with weapons never before known to the continent. The question therefore becomes: Can the international community assist Africa by applying a dead stop to the trafficking of the arms of war to our continent? Our economies are today regarded as grappling with problems. For all this, it is not we who are to blame, but the accident of history. As a student of history myself, I am saddened when I think of how our forefathers, brothers and sisters were pulled out of the continent of Africa and planted in the regions of the world where even almighty God had never designed them to be.

My appeal, therefore, is for understanding. The problems that we have — political and economic — were imposed on us. I shudder to say that even the so-called wind of democracy may soon bear some conditionalities and consequences for Africa. I am reminded of an era when multipartism became popular in Africa and we emulated systems from certain quarters of the world that subsequently dehumanized us.

On the quest for democracy, we are saying: Let the international community appreciate our cultural values. For democracy that is devoid of the reflections of our values will remain foreign to Africa and, indeed, to all the developing nations.

With these sad remarks, forgive me: I now feel like bursting into tears because of the ugly history with which Africa has been associated.

Mr. Erdös (Hungary) (*interpretation from French*): My delegation associates itself with the statement made on this agenda item by the representative of Luxembourg on behalf of the European Union.

The unprecedented changes that have radically altered the world's political landscape have opened the door to the establishment of the rule of law and to democratic development in an increasing number of countries throughout the world. Accordingly, new or restored democracies are characterized by a wide range of situations.

The region of Central and Eastern Europe, in which my country is located, has played a special role in the great changes that we are all witnessing. I would recall that the epicentre of cold-war ideological and military confrontation was located precisely in Central and Eastern Europe. In this context, I note that my country is proud of the significant role it played in the events that led to the dismantling of the political and psychological iron curtain that divided the two parts of Europe for so long.

In recent years, the profound changes on the international scene in Europe and elsewhere have made the worldwide process of democratization irresistible. This process is, however, far from complete. We must continue to strive tirelessly to promote democratization and to consolidate democratic institutions where they already exist. We must recognize without complacency that many challenges remain to be addressed throughout the world, such as the persistence of oppression and the overt or more subtle attempts to distort democracy. It is precisely because the young democracies in some parts of the world are so fragile that the international community must continue to help them to confront the dangers awaiting them, within and without.

In our era of globalization, we must bear in mind that national objectives can be achieved only if democracy, political stability and well-being are established and strengthened not only at home, but among one's neighbours as well. In this context, the proper functioning of democratic institutions, the positive performance of a market economy and the conduct of an open and rational foreign policy are essential if the multifarious problems arising within our societies and among our States are to be successfully addressed.

The depth and intensity of the process of democratization cannot, of course, be identical in all the countries where this process is under way. This shows the great variety of conditions in which this qualitatively new international situation is coming about. But in any event the great surge towards democracy in each of the countries concerned must reflect the universal values that are the basis of democracy and must reflect the will of the people — of which Governments, we must always remember, are merely the expression.

Even though, for political and historical reasons harking back to another era, democracy does not appear as a point of reference in the Charter, it is, as the report of the Secretary-General notes, more essential than ever to United Nations activities. Today's goal is to integrate democracy into the activities of the United Nations in various fields. We therefore welcome the readiness of the world Organization to give practical assistance to Governments in establishing States based on the rule of law.

Hungary is among the sponsors of draft resolution A/52/L.28, which was introduced this morning by the representative of Romania. This is because we agree with its political message and because we are aware that, with the end of the bipolar world, it is important for us to ensure that democratic governance is given the importance it deserves. We note, however, that the text of the draft resolution would benefit from editorial improvements in both the preambular and operative parts, to avoid redundancies and awkward diction.

The process that began almost 10 years ago brought together this year at Bucharest, the capital of Romania — which, I should note, was an ideal and meaningful venue for such deliberations — many countries that have joined the great family of democratic nations. We expect not only that this process will continue, but that the number of participants in this great enterprise of building democratic societies will continue to grow.

Mr. Paguaga Fernández (Nicaragua) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I am speaking on behalf of the following countries of Central America: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Panama and Nicaragua.

We thank the Secretary-General for his report, contained in document A/52/513, submitted in accordance with resolution 51/31 of 6 December 1996. The report describes recent international events on democratization and governance, including the Third International Conference of the New or Restored Democracies on Democracy and Development and the International Conference on Governance for Sustainable Growth and Equity, as well as the activities of the United Nations and the Organization's suggestions and recommendations to strengthen and promote the worldwide process of democratization. These are substantive contributions that Governments should bear in mind when they formulate and implement their national policies.

For decades, and especially since the Second World War, international relations were subject to clashing, divisive and antagonistic forces. But since the fall of the Berlin Wall a short time ago, we have seen how the ideological confrontation of the two super-Powers, which dragged the majority of countries into one or the other

sphere of influence, has — in spite of many difficulties, in particular the economic difficulties of the developing countries — given way to acceptance of the democratic ideal. A global effort is now under way to establish, strengthen and consolidate democracy.

Democratization, in short, is a worldwide movement that involves North and South, East and West. Far from being an abstract concept, democracy is — along with its inseparable ethical values — incompatible with the illusions that come about as a result of outdated rhetoric and discredited utopias. We who have freed ourselves for all time from totalitarianism and all other forms of hegemony have learned that democracy is the best model for guaranteeing a framework of freedoms that provides lasting and sustainable solutions to the economic, political and social problems that beset our societies.

Since the beginning of this decade, the process of strengthening and consolidating democracy has stood out in the Central American region, where after many years of internal conflict in several countries and of dictatorial Governments or military regimes, our societies now participate in the democratic way of life and in its inherent political pluralism, with the holding of periodic elections providing: transfer of power in keeping with the will of the people; open dialogue with civil society; recognition and protection of fundamental human rights including freedom of association and of expression; separation of powers, ensuring in particular an independent judiciary and the subjection of military to civil authorities; and accountability of leaders to their people for their actions.

In short, the sun of democracy is shining daily throughout Central America. Civilized dialogue has replaced war; what used to be achieved with bayonets and machine guns is now being achieved through elections and constitutional mechanisms; where despots once ruled, we now have the rule of law. As one of the great teachings of Simón Bolívar, the Liberator, tells us,

> "Nothing is as dangerous as leaving the same citizen in power for a long time. The people grow accustomed to obeying him, and he grows accustomed to giving them orders, which leads to usurpation and tyranny."

The democratic process should be not only political, but economic, social and cultural as well. It should be a process with open participation and should include controls to prevent arbitrary rule based on constant abuse of power. It must have mechanisms that ensure its validity in the social, economic and cultural spheres so that democracy is not a static model but a dynamic, constantly changing system always open to improvement.

There is no single definition of democracy that can identify its many and varied complex aspects and features; each people must organize itself and structure its political activities in keeping with its own characteristics, culture, customs and traditions. Nonetheless, we believe that the points we have mentioned are essential if a Government is to act transparently, legally and effectively, thus avoiding corruption.

Unfortunately, in our world there remain conflicts, violence, ethnic strife, religious intolerance, terrorism, drug trafficking, corruption, poverty, unjust international economic relations and a heavy external debt that continues to prove overwhelming. We still have an acute shortage of resources and ongoing environmental deterioration, scourges that jeopardize world peace and security and, by extension, the process of democratization.

Thus, new democracies must look to the future and face the new challenges arising; they must act steadily and persistently within our own countries, and cooperatively in international relations. This framework of international cooperation and recommendations within our societies has been taking shape in the three International Conferences of New or Restored Democracies. The first Conference was held in Manila, the Philippines; the second in Central America, in Managua, Nicaragua; and the third from 2 to 4 September 1997 in Bucharest, Romania, where the heroic events of December 1989 took place.

The progress review and recommendations of the Third International Conference of New or Restored Democracies on Democracy and Development has been circulated by the Secretariat in document A/52/334. That document is a programme of action for cooperation for new and restored democracies, in which we reaffirm commitment to the process of democratization in our societies, while recognizing the relationship of mutual support and interdependence between democracy, sustainable development and good governance.

Among the issues of greatest importance are those of determining new ways of consolidating democracy, eliminating the scourge of poverty, allocating more resources to the judiciary so as to ensure its independence

and effectiveness and absorbing the social cost of adapting new structures.

The ongoing improvement of our democratic institutions strengthens governance and fosters transparency and the full participation of civil society in the democratic process, together with economic growth and ongoing social equity. To this end, the Bucharest document has recommended the establishment of a follow-up mechanism or a secretariat. This follow-up would provide information on country programmes and on ways in which specific issues are addressed and would facilitate communications and understanding in new or restored democracies, as well as their cooperation with traditional democracies and national and international organizations, so as to enhance the outcome of programmes and to foster cooperation. The mechanism established should be impartial, transparent and economical. Until such a follow-up mechanism is established, the Chairman of the Third International Conference of New or Restored Democracies will carry out this function in cooperation with participating countries. Meanwhile, we hope that this Assembly will adopt by consensus draft resolution A/52/L.28, which was introduced by the delegation of Romania and sponsored by our participating countries and other friendly countries.

For Central America, democracy, with the flaws and imperfections that characterize any human endeavour, is the best form of government that humankind has invented to date. We must therefore give it our constant support so that it will not falter in any country of the world. We should bear in mind this quotation from the first paragraph of chapter 58 of the second part of *Don Quixote de la Mancha*:

> "Freedom, Sancho, is one of the most prefollcious gifts that the heavens have granted man; it cannot be equalled, even by all the treasures of land and sea; for liberty and for honour, one can and must risk one's life; and, on the contrary, captivity is the greatest evil that can happen to man."

If this quotation from Miguel de Cervantes is valid for individuals, it is even more so for all nations of the world. Respect for the dignity and inviolability of the human being, from the very moment of its conception, is the fundamental principle of democracy, and when we speak of freedom, we are thinking of it not just as a political concept; we are thinking of it, above all, in its social dimension.

Central America is moving optimistically forward along the broad avenues of peace, democracy and social justice, faithfully and persistently, towards the long-desired goals of sustainable development.

Mr. Mabilangan (Philippines): The coming year, 1998, is of particular significance to my country. It will commemorate the centennial of the founding of the Philippine Republic. The year will also mark the tenth anniversary of the formation of the International Conference of Newly Restored Democracies, held in Manila in 1988.

In 1986, the Filipino people arose as one to peacefully overthrow a dictatorial regime and to effect the return of democracy. After the restoration of its democratic institutions, the Philippines experienced a marked improvement in its economy, making it a favoured investment destination and a new "Asian miracle". Despite the recent currency problems my country has suffered, along with our South-East Asian neighbours, the Philippine economy remains robust and is successfully weathering this momentary difficulty.

The spirit of the "Peoples' Power" revolution was to sweep the world in the 1980s and 1990s. We were elated and proud to see the restoration or nascence of democracy in Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America. This revolutionary whirlwind took the world by surprise and has altered the contours of the geopolitical landscape.

In order to consolidate these gains, the Philippines and a handful of countries with like experiences convened the first International Conference of Newly Restored Democracies in 1988 and issued the Manila Declaration, which identified the indissoluble link between democracy, peace and development and called for mutual support among both new and old democracies particularly to safeguard the gains won by the newly restored democratic regimes against both internal and external threats.

The next Conference, hosted by Nicaragua in 1994, produced the Managua Declaration and Plan of Action, which sought to promote respect for democratic principles, to foster the dissemination of, and to arrive at, a broader understanding of democracy and to encourage greater cooperation and coordination among democracies, the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions. The name of the Conference was broadened to International Conference of New or Restored

Democracies to encompass the States which became democratic for the first time in their respective histories.

I wish to take this opportunity to express the most heartfelt thanks of the Philippines to the people and the Government of Romania for making the Third Conference, held in September in Bucharest, a resounding success. We also wish to express our gratitude to the United Nations Development Programme for its invaluable support, in both moral and material terms. I would also like to thank the Governments of the Netherlands, Switzerland, the Republic of Korea, Sweden, Germany and Canada and the Agency for the French-Speaking Community for their assistance.

The Bucharest Conference built upon the previous two conferences in injecting the participation of civil society. Academicians and leaders of non-governmental groups engaged government officials in meaningful and insightful discussions in the Conference's first Civil Society Forum. The Forum came to affirm the invaluable role that civil society plays in the development and maintenance of democracy and in the societal troika which includes government and the private sector as equal partners.

The Conference's "Progress Review and Recommendations" on safeguarding democracy, promoting development and improving governance addresses the international community as a whole, the United Nations, its Member States and international financial organizations. It is our hope that the community has been able to study and give serious thought to these recommendations and views, among them, first, that penal sanctions should be imposed on foreign entities and organizations that attempt to corrupt government officials and institutions; secondly, that gender balance cannot be achieved as long as gender inequality exists, and thus countries should examine the status of the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action; and, thirdly, that the evaluation of a country's performance on matters of democracy should be evaluated by the country itself, and not by other entities.

It is also gratifying to note the growing membership of the Conference from all regions. It has been decided that the next Conference will be held in Africa, thus making the round of regional representation complete. The Government of Benin has graciously offered to play host to the Conference.

The draft resolution before us and the report of the Secretary-General are direct results of the call for an enhanced and meaningful working relationship between the Conference and the United Nations system — the Secretariat, agencies and Member States. We are particularly grateful to the Secretary-General, and to his predecessor, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for their support for the aims and aspirations of the Conference through concrete actions and programmes, as well as through their recommendations, in the areas of electoral assistance, the strengthening of civil society and the coordination of United Nations activities in democratization and governance.

The movement of new or restored democracies is a growing force in the world today. I believe it is time that we members of the Conference began to assert the strength of our numbers and potential influence and aired our collective opinions on the vital issues of the day, such as in the realm of global peace and security, environmental protection and conservation, sustainable development, human rights and overall economic and social development.

In recognition of our growing numbers, may I reiterate the call made by my Foreign Secretary, Mr. Domingo Siazon, for us to consider the convening of a summit of heads of Government of new or restored democracies at the start of the new millennium.

Mr. Enkhsaikhan (Mongolia): Mongolia attaches great importance to the consideration by the Assembly of the agenda item entitled "Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies".

My delegation welcomes the Secretary-General's report on this item, contained in document A/52/513. It also welcomes the outcome of the Bucharest Conference of New or Restored Democracies on Democracy and Development, as well as that of the International Conference on Governance for Sustainable Growth and Equity, organized with the active participation of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

We agree with the Secretary-General that the movement of new or restored democracies and its world conferences have given a strong momentum to the process of global and regional democratization. The vast experience of many States in promoting or consolidating democracy provided rich material for the Secretary-General to concentrate, in the fourth report on this subject, on issues of policy and principles. Thus, the Subgroup on Capacity-Building for Governance of the

Administrative Committee on Coordination has defined, in general, 11 concrete principles of good governance, including an effective public sector, accountability/transparency of processes and institutions, effective participation of civil society/political empowerment and gender equality. As a new democracy, Mongolia believes that all these principles are essential in promoting or consolidating democracy.

Mongolia agrees with the conclusion that democracy is not a model to be copied or imposed, but rather a goal to be attained, and that the pace at which democratization can proceed is dependent on a variety of political, economic, social and cultural factors proper to the circumstances of a particular culture or society.

The experience of Mongolia's democratization shows that the latter can be defined as a move away from totalitarianism/authoritarianism to a democratic/participatory form of government and consists largely of two distinct stages: first, a stage of transition which ends when a new Government is installed as a result of free and fair elections and its legitimacy is accepted by all political actors, while the holding of subsequent elections is seen as part of a political process; and, secondly, a stage of democratic consolidation, which can be defined as a process aimed at achieving the long-term sustainability of the democratic process. Democratic consolidation most often faces a constellation of challenges and pressures of a non-normative character, such as socio-economic environment, lack of adequate resources, support, or lack of it, by the population of policy changes introduced, quality of civil society, empowerment of the citizenry, quality of the civil service, rational choices by political actors, integrity of leaders, party systems and, of course, the overall international environment. All these could amount to a painful process that requires time, persistent efforts and willingness to succeed.

The Secretary-General's report rightly points out elections as a vital element or yardstick of democratization. In the past seven years Mongolia has conducted three parliamentary, two presidential and two local elections, all of which have been recognized as free and fair. The degree of maturity of our democratization can be judged by the last two elections, parliamentary and presidential, held in 1996 and 1997 respectively. The parliamentary elections were significant in that they brought to office, in a landslide victory, those political forces that were newly formed in the early 1990s to challenge the dominance of the long-ruling, reformed ex-communist party. The transfer of power was smooth and orderly. The incumbent President, associated closely with the new democratic forces, lost in fair presidential elections, and again the transfer of power was smooth, orderly and dignified.

For Mongolia, as for most other ex-communist nations, the biggest challenge to democratic consolidation is posed by pressures of a socio-economic nature. As we have learned in the past few years, even simultaneous democratization and economic liberalization can exact high social costs, while economic hardships can weaken trust in the viability of democratic institutions. Therefore, the efforts to reduce economic hardships and poverty, hence social hardships and unrest, need perseverance or political will, adequate resources and international support and assistance. Convinced that the economic reform should be further accelerated so as to shorten the painful economic transition period, the new Government has undertaken in the past year a number of radical measures. Thus it has introduced a "zero" per cent import tariff and accelerated the pace of ongoing privatization. These measures also represent important steps to attract foreign direct investment and expand trade.

Redefining the role of the State constitutes another imperative, as pointed out in the Secretary-General's report. As practice demonstrates, a vibrant civil society and private sector are also critical to the process of democratization and its subsequent consolidation. Though civil society in Mongolia is emerging as an important actor, it has not yet matured as a full-fledged social partner to fully assume responsibilities or shape the terms of the debate on national issues. It is especially weak in rural areas, where political participation is sometimes confined to casting votes in the elections. As to the private sector, it is still in the process of consolidation and needs active legislative and other support of the Parliament and the Government.

As the International Conference on Governance for Sustainable Growth and Equity, held in New York last July, vividly demonstrated, good governance is essential in properly ensuring the interaction of the State, the private sector and civil society. As the report points out, the State creates a conducive political, economic and legal environment, while the private sector generates jobs and income, and civil society facilitates political and social interaction and mobilizes groups to participate in economic, social and political activities.

My delegation would like to take this opportunity to express its appreciation to UNDP and other organizers of

the Conference for their initiative and efforts that made it a success. Likewise, we believe that the Bucharest Conference was also very useful and productive. The Progress Review and Recommendations adopted at the Conference, as reflected in document A/52/334, are a valuable source of analytical study, while the proposed guidelines for strengthening policies and principles addressed to the Governments of the new and restored democracies are of immense practical importance. We believe that the proposal to develop some indicators to assess or monitor progress in democratization is a timely one that should be pursued. Mongolia is prepared to work together with others on this question.

Mongolia fully supports the convening of such conferences at regular intervals, seeing in them a valuable form of exchange of experience and cooperation. We express our readiness to host one of the forthcoming conferences in Mongolia soon.

As a sponsor of draft resolution A/52/L.28 on this item, introduced this morning by the representative of Romania, my delegation expresses the hope that it will be adopted without a vote.

Ms. Cornette (Guyana): The agenda item we are now considering, "Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies", has great significance for my country. Five years ago, in October 1992, Guyana became a newly restored democracy, after the first free and fair elections in decades. On 15 December, five years on, Guyanese will choose the Government that will lead our young democracy into the twenty-first century. At the last count, 10 political parties will be vying for that honour. This is testimony to the commitment of the Government and people of Guyana to democracy. It is from our efforts to secure democracy that we recognize the value of external support for it.

Guyana received invaluable assistance from the United Nations for the electoral process in 1992 and again in 1997. Consequently, Guyana knows first-hand the importance of the subject of our debate here today. On behalf of my Government, I take this opportunity to thank the Organization for the assistance which has been provided to us. I also wish to thank the Secretary-General for his informative and analytical report on the matter. We were pleased to note the nexus established between democracy and good governance and the importance of these elements for consolidating peace and development.

For fledgling democracies such as ours, the United Nations is the best place to seek support. Since the First International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, which took place in Manila in 1988, the question of democracy has been subject to much debate and action by diverse entities: Governments, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and academia, to mention but a few. The Third International Conference, convened last September in Bucharest, was preceded in July by the International Conference on Governance for Sustainable Growth and Equity, sponsored by the UNDP. Resulting from all of those discussions through the years is a general acceptance that democracy is like culture, a way of life that has to be learned and nurtured for it to survive and flourish. It is subject to the social, political and economic peculiarities of each national environment as much as it is affected by international activities. The support offered by the United Nations system must be designed to deal with these interlocking actualities.

Poverty, the external debt burden, illicit drug-trafficking and intra-State conflicts are among the many threats that confront our efforts to consolidate democracy. These are global issues that require global solutions. This is another reason why support by the United Nations system is important. Further, even as we focus specifically on the promotion and consolidation of democracy, it is obvious that many of the other activities of the United Nations are indirectly components of any support that the United Nations system extends. As the Secretary-General stresses in paragraph 46 of his report [A/52/513],

> "That the peace-building and development, democratization and governance efforts of the Organization are distinct but mutually reinforcing underlines the importance for the United Nations system as a whole to improve its ability to cooperate and coordinate its actions."

Accordingly, this creates an important role for the developed democracies in our international community. Assistance from them on a bilateral or, preferably, multilateral basis is almost a sine qua non for the success of new or restored democracies.

In our efforts to guarantee success, it is also important to focus on our youth. It is they who will eventually take up the reins of government. If we really want to promote, consolidate and ultimately preserve

democracy we have to look to the future. A key element of our strategy today, therefore, should be to prepare our leaders of tomorrow. Here again the United Nations can lend crucial support through the dissemination of information and the hosting of programmes and other activities to familiarize youth with the tenets of this important process. Due to the intrinsic value of democracy and good governance and their importance to sustainable development and peace-building, no stone should be left unturned in our efforts to ensure that new or restored democracies remain democratic. Wherever the United Nations system can provide support it must.

The support given by the United Nations system to Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies is unquestionably vital. It helps in providing guidance to the United Nations itself, to Governments, and to all others involved in fortifying democracy locally, regionally and globally. It is therefore necessary for the international community to intensify its efforts to create an international framework of support that is conducive to ultimate success in irrevocably consolidating new or restored democracies at the national level.

Mr. Aouad (Argentina) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I have the honour to express Argentina's gratitude for the support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies.

I should like to extend our thanks to the Secretary-General for his very thorough report, and to the Government and people of Romania for the success of the recent Third International Conference of New or Restored Democracies on Democracy and Development. We welcomed the conclusions of the Bucharest Conference, whose debates and recommendations help move us towards a future in which the democratization processes now under way are progressively consolidated.

Nevertheless, I would like to express our concern at the reports of regional experts that there are still severe threats to fragile democracies in specific regions. At the same time, we support the recommendation that the international community provide more assistance in combating those threats.

During 1997 there also took place in New York the International Conference on Governance for Sustainable Growth and Equity, which concluded that good governance is effective, participatory, transparent, accountable and equitable and promotes the rule of law. In this regard, we welcome the fact that the international community is encouraging consideration and gradual development of a new philosophy of cooperation in this area. Good governance and democratization, sustainable development and the consolidation of peace daily assume greater prominence in international debate.

The Argentine Republic reaffirms today its unswerving commitment to cooperate, through the United Nations system, in all initiatives to promote peace, the expansion of democracy and respect for human rights. It is precisely because of this commitment that we have taken two key initiatives, one in the field of international policy and the other in the realm of cooperation and humanitarian assistance. The first is Argentina's participation in peacekeeping operations within the United Nations collective security system, with 614 of our personnel scattered in various parts of the world. The other initiative is the "White Helmet Commission", launched by the President of Argentina in 1993. Designed to draw on the world's real potential for emergency humanitarian assistance, this is also an appropriate instrument for helping the United Nations in its work of consolidating international peace.

Argentina has returned to the path of democracy, after decades, and in the most diverse forums has maintained its determination to continue deepening the process of consolidating democracy, which it has been doing for 14 years without interruption.

Within our region my country took an active part in drawing up the presidential statement on a commitment to democracy, signed by the Heads of State of the members of the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR), together with Chile and Bolivia, which established that the full and effective functioning of democratic institutions was an essential condition for cooperation in MERCOSUR.

For all these reasons, my country has also participated actively in the democratization processes in Central America and the Caribbean, providing technical, economic and financial assistance, as well as electoral observers, and has taken part in peacekeeping operations when asked to do so.

My delegation has no doubt whatsoever that the democratic system of government is the best conduit for expression of the people's will. We believe that it is in the framework of democracy that initiatives and opportunities deriving from political and economic

freedom flourish. The modern formula for development rests on these freedoms, but also on States' responsibilities to society as guarantors of fundamental freedoms and the strengthening of the system itself.

The draft resolution comes within an international framework oriented towards promoting democracies and the parliamentary system. As on previous occasions, Argentina is a sponsor, convinced that we are thus contributing to the development of ideals that unite the international community.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine):When the United Nations was founded, it inscribed among the purposes set forth in its Charter the maintenance of international peace and security, the development of friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and the promotion and encouragement of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Since 1945, the world has undergone dramatic changes. We have survived the long years of cold war and ideological confrontation. The world political map has recorded the emergence of new States, most of which have made their choice in favour of democracy.

Today, the process of democratization affects North and South, East and West, on a worldwide scale. In recent years, there has been an almost universal recognition that a democratic system of governance is the best model to ensure a reliable framework for finding solutions to any political, economic and social problems.

Ukraine is not a new Member of the United Nations, but, as a State that regained its independence, it considers itself an inalienable part of the new or restored democracies. Having embarked on the road of democracy from the very first year of its independence, Ukraine has declared its political will to build an open, free and democratic State. In so doing, our country has managed to preserve peace and social accord in its society, to remove contradictions that might have developed into bloody conflicts on ethnic, political and economic grounds and, as a result, to secure national harmony.

Obviously, the adoption of the Fundamental Law of Ukraine on 28 June 1996 promoted the further strengthening of stability in its internal policy and harmony in its society. The new Constitution of Ukraine became a reliable guarantee of the rule of law and democratic principles and of personal rights and freedoms.

Thus the period of national formation, which lasted for six years, is completed. The State framework has been built, and now it should be strengthened and managed properly, first of all in the economic field.

Yet another sign of the further development of democracy in Ukraine has been the recent adoption by the Ukrainian Parliament of the law on its human rights representative or ombudsman. The main purpose of this institution is to establish a parliamentary control over the observance of the constitutional rights and freedoms of all citizens.

I would also like to note that at the present time a delegation of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe is paying a visit to Ukraine with the aim of assessing the latest developments in the sphere of local self-governance.

Despite the optimism prevailing in this Hall as to the process of democratization of the world community, it should be noted that there are still considerable potential threats to democracies in different parts of the world. Democratization is a lasting process that requires a careful attitude on the part of both national Governments and international organizations and institutions.

In this regard, the delegation of Ukraine would like to recall the initiative put forward by the President of Ukraine two years ago at the commemorative meeting of the United Nations General Assembly to establish a mechanism of United Nations trusteeship over the processes of formation of new States.

We are of the view that the current United Nations support for the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies is in line with that proposal. Our delegation commends the activities of the United Nations Secretary-General and the United Nations Development Programme in supporting and monitoring the efforts of the new or restored democracies, as mandated by the General Assembly, and strongly supports the recommendation of the Bucharest Conference in this regard.

We fully endorse the observations and recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General (A/52/513), in particular those related to United Nations activities in democratization and governance and in strengthening civil society, which outline the new trends in the movement towards democracy.

We believe that the further elaboration of the two concepts of democratization and good governance should be carried out in a unified manner, because those two phenomena are inseparably linked. My delegation hopes that this can be achieved through the proper combination of their agendas within a single framework.

As a participant at the Third International Conference of the New or Restored Democracies on Democracy and Development held this year at Bucharest, Ukraine endorsed the final document of the Conference, entitled "Progress Review and Recommendations". We regard that document as a significantly important one for further strengthening the policies and principles utilized by the Governments of new or restored democracies.

Our delegation fully shares the idea expressed in the final document of the Conference that:

> "United Nations activities should be designed to help meet the special circumstances and priorities of each country and, at the same time, offer guidance for the implementation of the recommendations and plans of action adopted by the major United Nations world conferences." [A/52/334, appendix, part IV.B]

One can say without any exaggeration that the process of democratization as a prevailing trend in the development of world civilization on the threshold of the new millennium will continue to increase in the twenty-first century. The peace, security and prosperity of peoples remain the priority of progressive humanity and the purpose of the United Nations existence.

In conclusion, let me once again confirm Ukraine's adherence to the principles of democracy and its readiness to continue to remain a cooperative partner of the United Nations in supporting the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies.

Mr. Biaou (Benin) (*interpretation from French*): I should like to join preceding speakers in extending the congratulations of the delegation of Benin on the efficient manner with which the officers of the General Assembly have been discharging their duties in guiding the work of this session.

As you are aware, Benin has been engaged in for more than seven years the process of democratization and building a State based on the rule of law. Thus, my delegation attaches great importance to agenda item 38, "Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies".

The changes that have taken place on the international stage in recent years have had a decisive impact on the socio-economic evolution of several nations and have altered the political and economic landscape of certain regions.

From Latin America to Africa, from Europe to Asia, several authoritarian Powers, under the pressure of democratic forces, have given way to democratic regimes more open and more respectful of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The process of democratization thus put in motion has gained ground and taken various paths, in keeping with the realities and requirements of each society as well as according to circumstances.

Unfortunately, the advance of democratization has not been uniform everywhere. Here and there, the movement has slowed down and even suffered setbacks in certain areas. In many countries, especially in my continent, Africa, fragile democracies are still under threat. There is every reason to believe that democratization now needs to find its second wind.

Against this background, there is a pressing need for new or restored democracies to act together in seeking ways and means to consolidate and build on what they have achieved. In this undertaking, the United Nations has an important role to play.

My delegation hopes that the current debate will allow us to identify ways and means by which the Organization will be able to provide more effective support in the areas of democratization and good management of public affairs.

Democracy cannot be consolidated as a system of government without harmonious socio-economic development that fosters the development of human beings in their various dimensions. My delegation therefore welcomes the General Assembly's adoption this year of the Agenda for Development, which adequately emphasizes complementarity and the complexity of the relationships between democracy and development.

Furthermore, this new dimension of international cooperation has been at the heart of the work of the Third International Conference of New or Restored

Democracies on Democracy and Development, which has held from 2 to 4 September 1997 in Bucharest, Romania. Benin took an active part in that Conference and would very much like to see its decisions and recommendations contribute, in the context of the current reforms, to defining within United Nations a better way of supporting the efforts of Governments to foster and consolidate new or restored democracies.

In fact, we are aware and convinced that merely meeting the requirements of the ritual of holding periodic elections is not enough and can in no way be considered decisive in establishing and guaranteeing lasting democracy in a country, particularly in a developing country such as my own, which is classified among the least developed.

Likewise, for democracy to have real meaning — for it to be an ideal shared by all peoples and for it to fully achieve its liberating and saving effects — it must be unambiguously expressed both at the national and the international levels. This means that democracy must also underlie and govern the organization and conduct of international relations. Now that the cold war is over and the Berlin Wall has fallen, the world, so long divided by East-West antagonism and by North-South imbalances, can and must develop and implement new, democratic relations among States.

It is therefore no exaggeration to say that the renewal of the United Nations, which began with the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of our universal Organization, must be supported by all our States and resolutely carried out in order to ensure the necessary conditions for the international community's harmonious pursuit of the democratization process at the dawn of the twenty-first century.

Following the peaceful changes that took place in Benin after the National Conference of Active Forces of the Nation in February 1990, the people of Benin have been experiencing an era of democratic renewal based, *inter alia*, on the building of the rule of law, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, the eradication of poverty and the promotion of sustainable development through its three component factors — economic, social and environmental. This new experiment is developing and taking root as time passes and events unfold.

In order to signal its deep-seated commitment to promoting the principles of democracy, the Government of Benin has offered to host the Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies at Cotonou. Benin will thus be the first country in Africa to host this new type of international conference.

My delegation would also like to take this opportunity to thank all the participants in the Third International Conference for their support for our offer, and to assure them that Benin will spare no effort to make the Conference a resounding success that will be inscribed in history and in memory. In order to achieve this noble ambition, Benin knows that it can count on the support of all States and the United Nations system, and in particular on the United Nations Development Programme.

Finally, my delegation fully associates itself with draft resolution A/52/L.28, introduced by Romania on behalf of the sponsors, and sincerely hopes that it will be adopted by consensus.

Mr. Minoves-Triquell (Andorra): The day before yesterday, I spoke in the Third Committee to convey a message with regard to the current debate on democracy and human rights versus economic and social rights, and it is fitting to restate that message today. Indeed, in our understanding, it is one of the goals of the United Nations to help Governments promote and consolidate new or restored democracies by using the means, procedures and ideas that political scientists such as Juan Linz of Yale University, for example, and other scholars have identified as democracy-consolidators, and especially by creating a network of support.

Andorra salutes all the efforts compiled in today's draft resolution as worthwhile and as being at the core of the objectives of the Organization, and applauds the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/52/513. We also wish to express our satisfaction at the success of the three International Conferences of New or Restored Democracies that have taken place since 1988, most recently in Bucharest.

We believe, though, that in order to create the right frame of mind for effective and sustained action in the promotion of democracy around the world, the basis and the importance of democracy must be acknowledged unequivocally by the Organization. And, by fostering in the Organization a somewhat philosophical debate on the nature and necessity of democracy — independent of economic advancement and development — we will be able to catch the attention of civil society and enlist its help in the arduous but uplifting task of expanding the reaches of democracy and human rights in the world.

(spoke in French)

> "It is evident to all alike that a great democratic revolution is going on among us, but all do not look at it in the same light. To some it appears to be novel but accidental, and, as such, they hope it may still be checked; to others it seems irresistible, because it is the most uniform, the most ancient, and the most permanent tendency that is to be found in history." [Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America, Introduction*]

(spoke in English)

Alexis de Tocqueville, more than 160 years ago, recognized the emergence and expansion of democracy — both as an idea and as a fact — and tried to chart its pattern of growth, as well as some of its philosophical limits. I am among those who believe that democracy and the establishment of a human rights regime at the planetary level are both irresistible and irrepressible, and that the limits are constituted only by the limits of personal liberty itself — that is, when our liberty infringes upon the liberty of our fellow human beings — for, after all, we are all social beings.

Of course, the fact that I am an Andorran is not unrelated to my core of beliefs. After all, I belong to a society that, with its small size and in its own historical way, has been able to cling to individual liberties and the tenets of tolerance for over 1,000 years. For example, I was recently reading about the times of the Inquisition and witch hunts in Europe, and I realized how benign its attenuated effects were on Andorra.

Why should we hold these commitments to democracy and human rights so firmly? The theory I hold is not one of national pride and glorious illumination — not at all. Our human beings are no better or no worse in essence than any of our fellows in the human family. We were just blessed, it seems to me, with a small territory to administer ourselves that is very isolated by its mountains and its snow from the rest of the world. With everybody knowing everybody else, inflicting harsh treatment on neighbours was a much more difficult task. Indeed, it is much easier to torture and kill on paper than it is in person, except for those who relish sadism and evil.

At the same time, living conditions were so difficult in Andorra that no one could be spared: the collective good was achieved by the cooperation of all and for all, and the collective good was translated into individual benefits of all kinds that could not be achieved by one person or one family alone. Thus, since 1419 we have had a Parliament and never a one-man or one-party rule. What is most astonishing is that, despite a small society and a strong set of cultural, religious and social values, the liberties of others are and have been so well respected in my country. Our history in the twentieth century is proof of that, our country having been a shelter of freedom for so many individuals fleeing intolerance, torture, totalitarianism and squalid death in the Spanish Civil War, which took place next door to us, and others escaping the barbarities of the Second World War through our northern border.

By taking the Andorran example as a model, I am doing my job as an ambassador, of course — as I did the other day in the Third Committee — which is to expand knowledge about my country, and I beg the Assembly's leniency for taking some time to do that here. But in the end, I will also show that, to a certain extent, it is possible to achieve human rights and democracy in poor countries, in remote communities, out of the mainstream of urban sophistication or New York debating societies. We Andorrans did it out of necessity. We held to those values that were necessary for our survival, but in the end it was a choice by society through democratic means, means that, I acknowledge, were easier and more natural to use in a primitive setting because of the size of the country.

At the end of the second millennium, democracy and human rights are also becoming more of a necessity to the planet. The 1948 Declaration of Human Rights, as the first preambular paragraph of today's draft resolution highlights, charted a course that could lead the world away from the path of self-annihilation the human family is sometimes tempted to take. If we respect the rights of others at the individual level, it is much less likely that we will become aggressive at the conglomerate level of the nation-State. Political scientists argue that democracies, the depositories of realistic respect for human rights, do not fight democracies. The choice of democracy and human rights, a choice of human philosophy that is the only option for a sane world in the centuries to come, has been up for grabs since 1948. We have indeed, for the first time in history, a written international standard of what is good and what is bad. The eternal human search for the implications of good and evil will probably never end, but the 1948 Declaration is a definite step in the right direction. In the name of my Government, I urge many countries to take that step, in full and with no restrictions and no qualifiers.

It is indeed the right moment to reflect upon this question. The fiftieth anniversary of the Declaration is fast approaching, and it could not hurt if some countries were to put their house in order so that we could have a proper celebration in all parts of the world. It is sometimes chilling to listen to the reports that come from certain regions of the world in terms of respect for democracy and human rights. By our vote and co-sponsorship of certain resolutions in the Third Committee, Andorra has made its position clear on this point. The argument that economic and social rights come before individual liberties is a fallacy: why should one exclude the other? After all, countries — even in the developing world — that have embraced democracy and human rights do not seem to be doing worse in terms of development than those that opt for authoritarian regimes.

In any case, since in many of those States human rights and democracy have not had a try, this remains an argument without possible demonstration. Countries such as mine that style themselves as defenders of democracy and human rights must also go beyond the status quo. We must foster tolerance at every level, giving a voice to those who do not have one yet and fostering respect for all members of society.

It is particularly important that we bring knowledge about democracy and human rights into the schools so that our children grow up with solid notions of what is right, of how precious every expression of human individuality is, of how much better a society is that, while tough with intolerant people, achieves strength through reciprocal individual respect and not through repression — through ballots and not through bullets. This is probably one of the most important points necessary for the consolidation of democracy and human rights everywhere: that our children be taught about them. Article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child insists on education in matters of human rights, and much is still left to be done in this area. Andorra is devoting particular attention to this subject so that Andorran schools can instil the values of the 1948 Declaration into its students.

As I stated in the Third Committee, the moment is now, and the message is dual. To those countries that fear human rights and democracy, fear not. There is no other way towards progress in the human condition in the years to come, independently of the economy. To those countries that hold democracy and human rights dear, we must go beyond what we have; we must dare to build better societies for all.

Mr. Baby (India): It is a particular pleasure for me, for reasons that I will explain, to speak to the Assembly on the agenda item entitled "Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies". That I should be the Indian representative speaking on this item illustrates the value of democracy as a system of governance, and of the unique diversity and strength of Indian democracy in particular.

I am a member of the Communist Party of India — Marxist. Giving the lie to the canard that communism as an ideology is opposed to democracy, my party functions within the democratic setup of India. We fight elections, and, as can be seen, we win them. My party is in office in the states of Kerala, West Bengal and Tripura — communists elected to power by the people. We are not in power in New Delhi, though my party is part of the ruling United Front at the centre. It is an indication of the maturity of Indian democracy that I was one of the Members of Parliament invited by the Government of India to represent it at this fifty-second session of the General Assembly. I am honoured to do so.

As the world's largest democracy, India supports the United Nations efforts to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies. We traditionally have had close relations with many of those countries. We have participated in the International Conferences of New or Restored Democracies, including the latest, held in Bucharest in September. The message from Bucharest was that democracy, development and good governance were linked, and that these States and those that support them must focus on all three. We have read with interest the Secretary-General's report (A/52/513) on the support which is being given by the United Nations system.

The new or restored democracies have embarked upon this crucial and essential journey towards representative government at a time when most of them are simultaneously faced not only with the struggle for development but with two other inescapable challenges as well. Domestically, there is pressure, and perhaps also a need, for most States to move towards a market economy, where the State is not the provider of goods and services but a facilitator. Internationally, there is the challenge of globalization. As the 1997 *Report on the World Social Situation* notes,

> "transnational forces that propel global changes ... are weakening the ability of national Governments to influence economic and social outcomes, often

putting fulfilment of even the national political commitments, not to mention the ability to influence global trends, beyond the reach of elected national representatives". [E/1997/15, p. 2, para. 8]

While the market economy has been elevated to a norm almost as widely accepted as democracy, the World Bank, in its *World Development Report 1997*, notes that many countries lack the basic institutional foundations for market development. At the same time, making the hard political choices that are essential in the transition to a market economy are that much more difficult in a democracy. The unemployed do not vote for governments that cannot give them jobs or which have laid them off; the task of educating the electorate can be almost insuperable for governments of an inexperienced democracy.

The United Nations can help not only in building national capacities but in pooling experiences from other democracies which have trod this path before. In India, for instance, we have adopted a framework to pursue, through decisions democratically taken, growth with social equity. We call this a market-plus policy. We would be glad to share our experience with others.

What complicates life for the new or restored democracies is that current political orthodoxy calls for the downsizing of the State. Governments, including in the States we are discussing, are being urged to divest themselves of many activities which have been the preserve of the State. However, this too has political consequences, and, in fact, if the World Bank's figures are to be believed, developing countries, where approximately a quarter of national income comes from State spending, still have some way to go before catching up with the levels of government spending in the developed world, where this accounts for almost half of total income. The United Nations system should not cater to the fashionable in its advice; it should analyse each country's situation objectively, and offer neutral, professional advice.

The United Nations system must address the needs which the new or restored democracies have identified very clearly. The Secretary-General's report, which is thought-provoking and innovative, acknowledges that the relationship between democratization, good governance and development is complex. In its work, the United Nations system must assess the specific needs of individual States or groups of States among the new or restored democracies and tailor its programmes accordingly. For instance, there are groups of countries where State capacity has to be built up. There are others where, on the contrary, State capacity is perhaps overdeveloped and now has to be put to different uses, to "steering rather than rowing". In a third group, State capacity is low, but nevertheless is not being used in the most productive manner. A single paradigm of assistance for capacity-building will not help.

Another major issue which all democracies must face, and which poses particular challenges to new or restored democracies, is the balance between decentralization or devolution on the one hand and central control on the other. In India, for instance, through a continual process of trial and experimentation, we have arrived at a system that works, but which is evolving. The People's Plan movement in my state is a unique experiment where, through Panchayat Raj, people at the grass-roots level are directly involved in planning and implementation. Another example is the community development society model in my state. Clearly, power has to be taken to the people. However, failure to take note of the specific characteristics and historical stage of a particular country or a region within a country while working on devolution and decentralization can upset national consensus in a new or restored democracy. Unequal growth among regions of a country, the devolution of responsibilities to a local government not yet equipped to take them on, or tensions between local governments encouraged by outside advice to take intransigent stands against the central Government, can all disrupt a burgeoning democracy. In extreme cases, these can lead to threats to the integrity and unity of a State. The advice of the United Nations system must not be driven by ideological bias, but must be objective, sensible, and responsive to the needs of each country.

Efforts to experiment with introducing new forms of democratic process to provide people with a choice of their elected representatives at the municipal or local level in certain countries deserve our notice and appreciation, if we are sincere about recognizing different historical traditions in the evolution of democratic political practice.

The role of civil society is of course increasingly important. Its impact on economic, social and even political developments will only increase. However, civil society is, and must be seen to be, a partner with Government in the promotion of a common objective. Again, it has become fashionable of late to project civil society as a watchdog that is adversarial to a democratic Government. This extrapolates the work of a few non-governmental organizations, which have played this role in specific sectors and in individual countries, to a global

norm. This is undesirable. In its work with new or restored democracies, the United Nations should not encourage this polarization, which could destroy the often fragile political consensus on which these States are based.

Although we are primarily addressing the work of the United Nations system, we have to bear in mind that, as the Bucharest Conference recognized, the international community has a vital role to play in support of new or restored democracies. Better terms of trade, enhanced access to markets, increased and stable investment flows, access to technology on a non-discriminatory basis and the availability of increased overseas development assistance are all essential if these countries are to satisfy the needs of economic and social development. If these needs are not met, development in these countries will falter, the social fabric will come under strain, and the populations will become disaffected. There will be reminders that the old systems offered a social blanket: as development is indeed the other face of democracy, why is that other face still veiled? Eventually, the value of democracy might itself be called into question. The world of mature democracies, therefore, has an abiding interest in seeing that the democratic experiment succeeds in the new or restored democracies.

The United Nations has many priorities, but assistance to the new or restored democracies should rank high among them. Unfortunately, its resources are limited, falling and now increasingly uncertain. What is most unfortunate is that the United Nations has been brought to this pass because the legislature of a major contributor, which is also a major democracy, chooses to ignore the Charter requirement that all Member States must pay their assessed contributions to the United Nations unconditionally. The Secretariat might very well long for new or renewed totalitarianism if democratic processes are given as an excuse for a State's refusal to pay its dues. We hope that this incongruous aberration will pass, and that the United Nations will be given, by all its Members, the resources it needs to discharge the many urgent mandates of the international community, including those of the new or restored democracies.

India will be glad to put at the disposal of the United Nations, for the benefit of the new or restored democracies, the experience and expertise it has built up over the last 50 years in the challenge of meeting the economic and social aspirations of a population through a democratic process. We wish our friends in these countries success in the challenging tasks they have set themselves.

Mr. Fulci (Italy): Allow me first of all to say how glad I am today to be addressing the General Assembly with you, Ambassador Camara, in the Chair. You are a distinguished, able and genuine daughter of a great continent: Africa.

In fully associating myself with the comments made by the representative of Luxembourg on behalf of the European Union, I would like also to emphasize some issues to which Italy attaches special importance.

The term "democratization" denotes the process by which a society becomes increasingly participatory. The United Nations system can help Member States in this process by aiding them in developing more equitable and effective governance of their peoples and in strengthening their civil society. The Organization may help them through its activities in peacemaking, peacekeeping and peace-building. In fact, as we all know, the majority of conflicts in which the United Nations deploys peace activities are internal ones. The United Nations is increasingly asked to initiate programmes that promote a democratic culture to help negotiate and implement the settlement of conflicts, with subsequent efforts to assist those affected countries in rebuilding their institutions and in consolidating peace.

To achieve the goal of making democracy a universal tool, five main areas, I believe, should be underlined. The first is, political parties, movements and civil society, which are indeed all essential elements to any healthy democracy. Furthermore, trade unions, non-governmental organizations and other associations can also be major forces in the move to democracy.

The second area is that of electoral assistance. In recent years the international community, as the Secretary-General pointed out in a recent letter to Member States, has had greater recourse to United Nations support in this crucial area. Italy has made an active contribution — in Africa, Central America and Europe — to programmes for electoral assistance, the strengthening of civil society, human rights education and training, drafting of electoral laws and voter registration and verification.

The third area is that of media environment. Freedom and pluralism are prerequisites of democracy, and the development of a free and responsible press is indeed essential to effective democratization. In this regard, it is very encouraging to see how close the relationship between the United Nations and the media is

becoming. As members of the Assembly know, the second World Television Forum, established by General Assembly resolution 51/205, has just concluded, with even larger participation than last year, especially from countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean.

The fourth area is respect for human rights, which is the foundation of democracy. In this respect, we praise the work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, which, in our opinion, should be able to increase its activities and be further encouraged to establish concrete cooperation programmes with Member States. As my Foreign Minister said yesterday at the World Television Forum:

> "We are indeed lucky that States have no right any longer to inflict harm on their own citizens."

Fifthly, institution-building and governance is another area where Member States have begun to look to the United Nations for assistance. Specific attention should be paid to strengthening public administration and making it more accountable and transparent. At its meeting on this subject at its resumed fiftieth session, in April 1996, the General Assembly addressed the following key concerns: political legitimacy; freedom of association and participation; a fair and reliable judiciary; freedom of information and expression; effective and efficient public sector management; and interaction with organizations of civil society. In this regard, the efforts of the Division for Governance, Public Administration and Finance of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat should be commended.

Italy is deeply committed to the consolidation of democracy in countries that have experienced institutional turmoil or conflicts. The case of Albania is a case in point and the most recent example. After the successful completion of Operation Alba and the holding of free, democratic elections in that country, there was a ministerial conference in Rome on 17 October. On that occasion, the Foreign Minister of Italy, Mr. Lamberto Dini stated,

> "The rule of law, rehabilitation of the judiciary system, enhancement of standards in education, health and public administration, restructuring and raising the standards of police and defence forces to the level of modern and democratic societies, are all elements of a comprehensive plan to establish the right conditions for long-term stability."

Cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations could also make a remarkable contribution to the process of consolidating democracy. Such cooperation is taking place in Europe, especially with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). We welcome the fact that the General Assembly will once again discuss this item in the coming days with the representative of OSCE.

This year two events highlighted the debate on new and restored democracies: the Third International Conference of New or Restored Democracies on Democracy and Development, which took place at Bucharest, Romania, from 2 to 4 September, and the International Conference on Governance for Sustainable Growth and Equity, held in New York from 28 to 30 June 1997.

The Bucharest Conference, in which my country actively participated, underlined the mutually reinforcing relationship between democracy and sustainable development. It added a new dimension to the discussion of democracy and engendered new thinking on international cooperation in this area. New issues for consideration include the role of civil society and the private sector in democratization, gender participation and the use of globalization to benefit the consolidation of democracy.

Italy welcomes the guidelines, principles and recommendations adopted both at the Bucharest and the New York Conferences. We also wish to congratulate the Government of Romania on organizing such a successful Conference.

Finally, Italy deeply appreciates the decision of the Bucharest Conference to hold the next conference in an African country; Benin, I understand, was decided upon this morning. This decision symbolizes the invaluable contribution that countries from the African continent can make to the universalization of the concept and practice of democracy.

Mr. Spitzer (United States of America): The United States fully endorses the findings of the Secretary-General's recent report on United Nations support for the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies — in particular, its observations and recommendations concerning electoral assistance, strengthening civil society, coordinating United Nations activities in democratization and governance, and promoting democracy in the twenty-first century.

The United States remains committed to the consolidation of the world's new or restored democracies. We understand that many of these nations face the challenge of simultaneous transitions from authoritarianism to democracy, from a planned to a market economy and even, in some cases, from war to peace.

That is why we applauded the focus of the recent Bucharest Conference on the critical link between democracy and sustainable development. And that is why we applaud the efforts of the Secretary-General to use the democratization and governance agenda as a means to bridge the peace and development agendas of the United Nations.

The steady growth in the number of new or restored democracies reflects not only the universality of our shared cause, but the effectiveness of the United Nations varied support.

The United States will continue to work closely with the Secretary-General and Member States to strengthen further this crucial support. We are honoured to co-sponsor the draft resolution in support of the efforts of the United Nations system to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies.

Mr. Jele (South Africa): My delegation attaches particular importance to this agenda item and is pleased to participate in this debate.

The United Nations has for decades been at the forefront of the struggle of peoples around the world for justice, equality and the exercise of their democratic rights and fundamental freedoms.

Africa has cast aside the yoke of colonialism and my own country has, with the support of this Organization and its membership, rid itself of the scourge of racial tyranny, known as the system of apartheid.

Our continent continues to suffer from sporadic incidents of civil strife and military dictatorships. It is, therefore, all the more appropriate that the Secretary-General has produced on this agenda item a forward-looking report, which contains an all-encompassing approach to promoting democracy for the twenty-first century.

The importance of the report lies in the fact that it addresses the process of global democratization in an integrated manner and underscores that democratization is an exercise which does not fall exclusively within either the political or the developmental agendas of our Organization, but, rather, that it should be treated in a holistic fashion.

The report also draws upon the conclusions and recommendations adopted at the Third International Conference of the New or Restored Democracies on Democracy and Development, held in Bucharest in September 1997. My delegation wishes to highlight the conclusion reached that good governance is effective, participatory, transparent, accountable and equitable, and promotes the rule of law.

Governance is effective only where three key elements — the State, the private sector and civil society — function in partnership in creating the political, economic and social conditions which are conducive to ensuring sustainable human development. A sound democratic structure and good governance present two of the cornerstones of peace and development in any society.

My delegation also notes the importance which the Secretary-General attaches to the emergence of civil society as being critical to the processes of democratization and empowerment. We concur with this view, and also believe that the role of civil society should not be restricted merely to the process of democratization. Civil society has an equally important role to play in areas such as the promotion of development, human rights and the rule of law.

My delegation is also in agreement with the recommendation of the Bucharest Conference that, in order to achieve the desired success in the process of democratization, the international community should make a commitment to collaborate with the new or restored democracies, to provide adequate support for the attainment of the objectives of democracy and fostering and expanding governance, democracy and participation programmes.

The United Nations system continues to play an important role in helping new or restored democracies to meet the challenges of developing the economic and social infrastructures needed for sustainable human development. My delegation notes with satisfaction the Secretary-General's observation that the United Nations does not endorse any specific form of government, and that democracy is a goal and not a model.

The cold-war era is something of the past. While the threat of inter-State conflict remains in certain parts of the world today, the focus has turned to internal strife. It is widely recognized that the role of the United Nations in assisting to resolve these threats to peace has become far more intricate. However, we cannot shirk our responsibilities simply because the task has become too difficult.

The obligations of our Organization to the peoples in these countries and territories and the responsibility of Member States in helping to promote and consolidate democratic cultures and societies, places new demands on us as we prepare to enter the twenty-first century. In this context, my delegation fully concurs with the Secretary-General's observation that the current system-wide process of reform marks an opportune moment for us to reflect on innovative approaches in order to deal with these challenges.

As a sponsor, my delegation fully supports the draft resolution, and hopes that it will be adopted by consensus.

Mr. Park (Republic of Korea): Today we live in a world that enjoys more pluralism and a greater number of democratic Governments and democratic global institutions than in all of human history. The Republic of Korea, as a country which has experienced many challenges in its own long journey to the democracy it enjoys today, knows the critical importance of political pluralism and respect for human rights. We therefore are pleased to be a sponsor of draft resolution A/52/L.28, entitled "Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies".

Although an impressive number of States have been successful in democratization, in many parts of the world democracy remains a fragile construct, with weak socio-economic foundations. In certain regions a disconcerting number of people continue to suffer under oppressive authoritarian regimes. And in many new democracies economic hardships are in danger of undermining popular support for open societies and free markets.

The success of democratic changes requires wise leadership, good governance and popular support, as well as favourable external conditions. Civil society has a vital role to play in this process and, indeed, the involvement of non-governmental organizations in fledgling democracies has helped lay the groundwork for a tradition of pluralism. We also believe that the United Nations and the international community should continue to support the efforts of Governments of the new or restored democracies to strengthen the roots of their new systems.

We would also like to assure you, Madam President, that the Republic of Korea will continue to provide various forms of assistance to the world's newly democratized countries. One of the numerous ways Korea has been helping those countries is through its expanding programme of development assistance, particularly through support for human resources development. Based on our experience, strong human capital is one of the most critical components of development and is essential for strengthening the roots of any nascent democracy. When countries invest substantially in human resources development, they enable their people to become agents of their own development and foster a strong civil society.

The Secretary-General's report provides a thorough overview of the issues relating to democracy. My delegation is pleased to agree with his observations and support the recommendations contained in the report on the issues of electoral assistance, the strengthening of civil society, the coordination of activities in democratization and governance, and the promotion of democratization in the next century.

We realize that, as the report indicates, in a world with a large number of fledgling democracies, further steps should be taken by the United Nations system as a whole to ensure better cooperation and coordinate its democratization activities, including the provision of electoral assistance. In support of United Nations electoral assistance activities, the Republic of Korea has participated in various electoral observer missions, including those in Cambodia, South Africa, Mozambique, Palestine, Bosnia and Algeria.

Allow me to assure you, Madam President, that in all areas of United Nations efforts to promote democratization Korea stands ready to continue its active participation and support. As a relatively young democracy ourselves, Korea is particularly committed to the promotion and consolidation of democracy and good governance around the globe.

Democracy, we believe, is one of the fundamental building blocks of development and prosperity. Another of those building blocks — closely related to democracy — is respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. And on that note, let me take this opportunity to give a reminder of the important

commemoration next year of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. That commemoration will, we trust, help further strengthen the resolve of the international community to promote democracy and good governance throughout the world.

On a final note, my delegation would like to thank both the Romanian Government for hosting the Third International Conference of the New or Restored Democracies on Democracy and Development, this past September, and the Romanian delegation for the leading role it has played in submitting this important draft resolution.

Mr. Sallah (Gambia): My delegation attaches great importance to this agenda item — hence my maiden statement from this rostrum today.

I wish to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report. My congratulations go to the Romanian delegation on the successful outcome of the Third International Conference of the New or Restored Democracies on Democracy and Development.

Prior to July 1994 my country, the Gambia, was synonymous with multi-party politics and periodical elections. Outwardly, this state of affairs was commended by the international community. However, whilst the Gambia was being singled out as one of the African countries with democratic forms of government, characterized by periodical elections, its so-called democracy was bedevilled with rampant corruption, widespread poverty and social injustice.

To avoid the country's sliding into civil strife, the military intervened on 22 July 1994 in a peaceful manner and introduced a comprehensive programme of rectification and reconstruction which was divided into governance aspects and development projects. It introduced new and meaningful dimensions to democracy by introducing a civic education programme in a country where 80 per cent of the population is illiterate. The military also lowered the voting age from 21 years to 18 years, to make democracy more participatory, and revised the 1970 Constitution to include not only the traditional concepts of fundamental human rights and freedoms, independence of the judiciary and the rule of law, but also the right to development in the socio-economic domain.

Also, for the first time an ombudsman was introduced to make the Government and public services more responsive to the rights and needs of the citizenry. The governance aspect of the programme proceeded hand in hand with the implementation of the development projects.

What the military Government achieved was admirable and unprecedented. During this brief two-year period, it organized a referendum to adopt the revised Constitution and it held free and fair elections — both presidential, held in September 1996, and legislative, in January 1997. Both elections were conducted under the supervision of an independent electoral commission.

In the area of development projects, more high schools were built, a new hospital and a new international airport were also constructed, new macadamized roads were built, and there was much improvement in the water and electricity supply.

The implementation of these development projects, under the tenets of social justice outlined above, is thus in consonance with the principles of democracy and social justice, as enunciated in paragraph 24 of the Secretary-General's report [A/52/513].

My delegation is also in agreement with paragraph 27 of the report, which says that the United Nations

> "does not endorse or promote any specific form of government. Democracy is not a model to be copied but a goal to be attained." [A/52/513, para. 27]

My delegation believes in a goal of development and social justice, accountability and the enjoyment of human rights, and not only through the holding of free and fair elections.

In conclusion, I wish to thank the United Nations for providing financial and logistical assistance for the implementation of the programme of rectification and reconstruction during the two-year period when the Gambia was under military rule. This enabled us to usher in the genuine democracy which has now been put in place in the Gambia.

My delegation continues to count on the United Nations system for the promotion and strengthening of democracy. Our system of democracy in the Gambia has been translated from rhetoric to reality, and the democratic principles enshrined in our new Constitution are no longer regarded as laws in books but not in action.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/52/L.28.

I would like to point out that since its introduction, the following countries have become sponsors of draft resolution A/52/L.28: Angola, Belarus, Croatia, France, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Spain, Suriname, Thailand and Uruguay.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt the draft resolution?

Draft resolution A/52/L.28 was adopted (resolution 52/18).

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 38?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 34 (*continued*)

Cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Cooperation Organization

Report of the Secretary-General (A/52/313)

Draft resolution (A/52/L.20/Rev.1)

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/52/L.20/Rev.1.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/52/L.20/Rev.1.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt the draft resolution?

Draft resolution A/52/L.20/Rev.1 was adopted (resolution 52/19).

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to conclude its consideration of agenda item 34?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 1.35 p.m.